

# Institutional Racism

Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and this is the 8<sup>th</sup> principle minute. With the adoption of the 8th Principle, our congregation committed to dismantle racism, beginning within our walls.

An institution can be racist even if all members are engaged in anti-racism work. Let me say that again; an institution can be racist even if all members are actively anti-racist.

In order to deconstruct any racist aspects of our society, we must first identify them. That requires an open discussion, free of preconceived notions about what institutional racism is and how it might apply to First Unitarian. This cannot be taken as personal. When questions are asked, they are just questions requiring an honest answer.

We at First U do have a long history of anti-racist work that must be acknowledged, but in evaluating our current state as an institution, it is almost besides the point. We, as individuals, can all be doing everything that is possible in our personal lives to address racism, but our institutions might have a long way to go. Since they have not undergone the same critical examination that we have as individuals, we cannot know what growth is necessary, desirable, and possible. If we do not begin with a belief that growth is always possible, we negate that possibility and commit to stagnation.

It is also worth noting that, while the visible impacts of institutional racism are clear, the underlying structures that cause them are not always readily apparent. Moreover, we are part of a very large learning community. UU congregations that have adopted the 8th principle are all in the same boat; we are learning together how to change. This is new ground without very many concrete examples to follow. It can be expected that the path will not be straight and we can expect bumps along the way.

Together we will continue this journey toward spiritual wholeness, build a beloved community, educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist. We will continue to look at our own practices, identity,

and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions.